

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06  
ACDA-07 /065 W  
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R 210700Z JUN 77  
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7894  
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA  
USMISSION NATO  
AMCONSUL ADANA  
AMCONSUL ISTANBUL  
AMCONSUL IZMIR  
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES  
EUCOM  
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ANKARA 4685

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: MPOL, TU  
SUBJ: RESIGNATION OF TURKISH ARMY COMMANDER GENERAL ERSUN

REF: A) STATE 139803 (DTG 161614Z JUN 77) (NOTAL),  
B) ANKARA 4594 (DTG 160745Z JUN 77), C) ANKARA 4241  
(DTG 021415Z JUN 77)

1. SUMMARY: WE THINK INTERNAL ARMY POLITICS MOST LIKELY  
EXPLANATION OF ERSUN'S EARLY RETIREMENT. IMMEDIATE EFFECTS  
OF ERSUN'S DEPARTURE ARE TO REMOVE ERSUN FROM CONTENTION AS  
SUCCESSOR TO TGS CHIEF SANCAR AND TO GOVE OTHER SENIOR  
OFFICERS A CHANCE TO MOVE UP. PRESS CONTINUES TO SPECULATE  
ABOUT ERSUN'S REMOVAL AND HIS POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR. ERSUN  
INCIDENT UNDERLINES IMPORTANT ROLE OF MILITARY IN TURKISH  
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POLITICS. IN TIME OF CRISIS MILITARY INTERVENTION MUST BE  
CONSIDERED POSSIBLE, BUT THERE IS STRONG RESISTANCE WITHIN  
THE MILITARY TO INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS. THERE IS NO  
EVIDENCE THAT PRESENT CONDITIONS ARE SUFFICIENTLY DISTURBING  
TO THE MILITARY TO OVERCOME THIS RESISTANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. AS REPORTED IN REF B, THE REASONS FOR AND THE TIMING OF

GENERAL ERSUN'S SUDDEN RETIREMENT HAVE NOT BEEN FULLY EXPLAINED.  
WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT ERSUN'S REMOVAL  
WAS A RESULT OF INTERNAL ARMY POLITICS AND NOT REPEAT NOT  
ASSOCIATED WITH NATIONAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, BUT WE  
CANNOT BE SURE. A MORE DEFINITIVE EXPLANATION WILL BE  
POSSIBLE ONLY WHEN MORE OF THE DETAILS OF THE INCIDENT BECOME  
AVAILABLE.

3. REGARDLESS OF THE REASON, ERSUN'S RETIREMENT WILL  
PROBABLY RESULT IN COMPLETE RESHUFFLE OF THE SENIOR ARMY  
COMMANDERS. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHANGE ARE IMPOSSIBLE  
TO DETAIL AT THIS TIME BECAUSE A) IT IS NOT CLEAR EXACTLY  
WHICH OFFICERS WILL MOVE WHERE AND B) WE ARE NOT FAMILIAR  
WITH THE PERSONAL POLITICAL INCLINATIONS OF MOST SENIOR  
OFFICERS. ONE CLEAR RESULT OF THE INCIDENT IS THAT ERSUN,  
WHO IS RUMORED TO BE SYMPATHETIC TO THE EXTREME RIGHT-WING  
NATIONALIST ACTION PARTY (NAP) AND WHO IS NOT PARTICULARLY  
HIGHLY REGARDED BY HIS PEERS, IS NO LONGER IN A POSITION TO  
BECOME THE COMMANDER OF THE TURKISH GENERAL STAFF (TGS).  
ERSUN WAS SCHEDULED TO RETIRE IN MARCH 1978-- THE SAME TIME  
AS TGS CHIEF SANCAR--AND HE COULD POSSIBLY HAVE BEEN  
EXTENDED ON ACTIVE DUTY AND SUCCEEDED SANCAR.

4. ERSUN'S EARLY RETIREMENT PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY  
FOR ONE OF THE SENIOR UNIT COMMANDERS TO BE MOVED UP TO  
REPLACE HIM. THE COMMANDING GENERALS OF THE FIRST, SECOND  
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AND THIRD ARMIES ARE ALL DUE FOR RETIREMENT IN AUGUST 1977.  
IF ONE OF THESE SHOULD BE NAMED ARMY COMMNADER DURING THE  
NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS, HE WOULD THEN BE IN A POSITION TO BE

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-----024025 210932Z /10

R 210700Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7895  
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EXTENDED ON ACTIVE DUTY FOR AN ADDITIONAL YEAR AND COULD THEREFORE SUCCEED TGS CHIEF GENERAL SANCAR. ACCORDING TO UNVERIFIABLE RUMORS, THE TWO PRIMARY CANDIDATES TO REPLACE ERSUN ARE FIRST ARMY COMMANDER ERSOZ AND THIRD ARMY COMMANDER ESENER. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS WILL EVENTUALLY PLAY A ROLE IN WHO REPLACES ERSUN. ESENER IS RUMORED TO BE CLOSELY TIED TO PRIMIN DEMIREL WHILE ERSOZ MORE INCLINED TOWARD PRIMIN-DESIGNATE ECEVIT. AS THE PRESENT TIME, HOWEVER, NEITHER HAS BEEN DESIGNATED TO REPLACE ERSUN AND SANCAR HAS ASSUMED TEMPORARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMAND OF THE ARMY.

5. THE ERSUN INCIDENT CONTINUES TO BE A SUBJECT FOR PRESS SPECULATION. JUNE 18 MILLIYET REPORTED THAT FIRST ARMY COMMANDER ERSOZ WOULD SOON BE NAMED ACTING ARMY COMMANDER, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND IF ECEVIT IS SUCCESSFUL IN HIS CURRENT EFFORT TO FORM A GOVERNMENT, ERSOZ'S ASSIGNMENT WILL BE CONFIRMED. THE NEWSWEEKLY YANKI, WHICH REPORTEDLY HAS GOOD SOURCES WITHIN THE MILITARY, REPORTS SEVERAL RUMORS IN ITS CURRENT EDITION. ACCORDING TO ONE RUMOR, ERSUN WAS REMOVED BECAUSE HE HAD INITIATED AN INQUIRY INTO THE PRESENTATION OF A PLAQUE TO PRIMIN DEMIREL BY THIRD ARMY COMMANDER ESENER. ANOTHER RUMOR HAS IT THAT FORMER PRESIDENT BAYAR, WHO SUPPORTED DEMIREL IN THE JUNE 5 ELECTIONS, HARBORS A GRUDGE AGAINST ERSUN FOR HIS BEHAVIOR FOLLOWING THE 1960 43;9)7589,. ERSUN WAS ASSIGNED AT THAT TIME AS A LIAISON OFFICER ON YASSIADA, THE ISLAND PRISON WHERE BAYAR AND OTHER FORMER GOVERNMENT FIGURES WERE BEING HELD. ACCORDING TO THIS STORY, BAYAR DEMANDED THAT ERSUN BE REMOVED PRIOR TO THE ELECTION.

6. ERSUN'S LAWYERS RELEASED TO THE PRESS JUNE 19 THE TEXT OF THE APPEAL THEY WERE TO PRESENT TO THE MILITARY HIGH

ADMINISTRATIVE COURT JUNE 20. ACCORDING TO VARIOUS NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS, THE APPEAL CLAIMS THAT THE PURPOSE, RATIONALE, AND MANNER OF ERSUN'S RETIREMENT WERE ILLEGAL. DESPITE THE DISCLAIMER OF INTEREST IN RETURNING TO HIS POSITION AS ARMY COMMANDER (REF B), SOME NEWSPAPERS REPORT THAT ERSU HAS BEEN SEEKING LEGAL OPINIONS CONCERNING THAT POSSIBILITY.

7. THE ERSUN INCIDENT UNDERLINES THE IMPORTANT ROLE THE TURKISH MILITARY HAS TRADITIONALLY PLAYED IN TURKEY'S POLITICAL LIFE. MILITARY OFFICERS GENERALLY BELIEVE THAT THE MILITARY HAS A SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO ACT AS THE OVERSEER AND PROTECTOR OF TURKISH NATIONAL INTERESTS. IN MODERN TIMES, IT HAS INTERVENED IN THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROCESS WHEN IT DEEMED THAT CIVILIAN LEADERS WERE EITHER STRAYING FROM OR INEFFECTIVE IN PURSUING THE COURSE ESTABLISHED BY ATATURK.  
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8. IN TIMES OF POLITICAL CRISIS, THE POTENTIAL FOR MILITARY INTERVENTION AND OF POSSIBLE MILITARY INTERVENTION ARE ALWAYS PRESENT. NEVERTHELESS, ACTUAL INTERVENTION IS GENERALLY DEPENDENT ON THE PERSONAL ATTITUDES OF SENIOR COMMANDERS. (THIS WAS NOT THE CASE IN 1960 ALTHOUGH THE MIDDLE-LEVEL OFFICERS WHO CARRIED OUT THE COUP DID ENGAGE THE ARMY COMMANDER AS THEIR LEADER.) THE PERSONAL ATTITUDES OF THE PRESENT MILITARY LEADERS, INsofar AS WE KNOW THEM, ARE ANTI-INTERVENTIONIST. THE RETIREMENT OF TGS CHIEF GENERAL SANCAR MAY CHANGE THAT SITUATION; HOWEVER, WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT THE NEXT GROUP OF SENIOR MILITARY COMMANDERS WILL BE ANY MORE INCLINED TOWARD INTERVENTION THAN THE PRESENT ONE.

9. DURING THE POST ELECTION PERIOD, TALK OF MILITARY INTERVENTION IS MUTED. THE MAJORITY OF TURKISH MILITARY OFFICERS SUPPORT THE REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP) OF BULENT ECEVIT AND THEY ARE GENERALLY SYMPATHETIC WITH HIS CURRENT EFFORTS TO FORM A GOVERNMENT. SHOULD HE FAIL TO DO SO AND SHOULD A PROLONGED GOVERNMENTAL CRISIS ENSUE, THERE WOULD BE A RESURGENCE OF TALK ABOUT MILITARY INTERVENTION. HOWEVER, THE PROSPECT OF INTERVENTION IS NOT ATTRACTIVE TO MOST MILITARY OFFICERS. WITHIN THE OFFICER CORPS IT IS A GENERALLY ACCEPTED MAXIM THAT THE 1960 REVOLUTION--HOWEVER NECESSARY--DAMAGED THE PRESTIGE AND PROFESSIONALISM OF THE MILITARY SERVICE. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS GENERAL RESISTANCE TO INTERVENTION COULD ONLY BE OVERCOME BY A SEVERE CRISIS OR THE DETERMINED LEADERSHIP OF AN INTERVENTIONIST COMMANDER. (THE EXTENDED GOVERNMENT CRISIS OF 1974 AND 1975, THE CONTINUING TRAGIC DOMESTIC SECURITY SITUATION AND A SEVERE AND DEEPENING ECONOMIC CRISIS HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENT TO OVERCOME THAT RESISTANCE.) THEREFORE,

WHIEL WE CANNOT DISCOUNT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE MILITARY  
WILL AGAIN SOME DAY INTERVENE IN TURKISH POLITICS, WE  
HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT ANY SENIOR COMMANDER OR ANY SIGNIFICANT  
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ELEMENT WITHIN THE MILITARY IS AT THIS TIME GIVING ANY  
CONSIDERATION TO THE POSSIBILITY OF INTERVENTION.  
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## Message Attributes

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